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AMENDMENT

IN THE CLAIMS

Please Amend Claims 12-16, and add new Claims 19 and 20, as follows:

1. (Original) A multi-layer article comprised of a fluoroelastomer polymer layer and a substrate wherein the bond between the layers is formed through a three stage molding technique where the substrate alone is first pre-cured to an incomplete state of cure in a mold at a temperature of 75 to 150 C, secondly an uncured fluoroelastomer film of less than or equal to 0.3 mm thickness is placed on the substrate and the layers are cured together in the mold at a temperature of 150 to 250 C and finally the article is removed from the mold and cured in an oven at a temperature of 100 to 180 C such that the cross linking of the layers forms a permanent bond between them, and wherein the fluoroelastomer comprises a monomer segment derived from an olefinic hydrocarbon.
2. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the fluoroelastomer is a copolymer including tetrafluoroethylene.
3. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the fluoroelastomer is a copolymer including vinylidene fluoride.
4. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the fluoroelastomer is a copolymer including hexafluoropropylene.
5. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the olefinic hydrocarbon is propylene.
6. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the olefinic hydrocarbon is ethylene.

S/N 10/711,607 (AMA No. 2004-309-SSI)

7. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the substrate includes a non-fluorinated polymer.
8. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 7, wherein the non-fluorinated polymer comprises a thermoplastic polymer.
9. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 7, wherein the non-fluorinated polymer comprises a thermoplastic elastomer.
10. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 7, wherein the non-fluorinated polymer is selected from the group consisting of nitrile rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene monomer rubbers, epichlorohydrin rubbers, ethylene-acrylate copolymer rubbers, polyamides, polyurethanes, polyolefins, and combinations thereof.
11. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the fluoroelastomer is a fluoroplastic.
12. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a multi-layer article, comprising the steps of:
- (a) ~~that is comprised of the following: providing associating~~ a polymer layer ~~comprising a fluoropolymer; providing with a substrate in a mold; providing a method where the bond between the layers is formed through a three stage molding technique where the said~~ substrate alone is first pre-cured to an incomplete state of cure in a said mold at a temperature of 75 to 125 C,
- (b) ~~secondly~~ an uncured fluoroelastomer film of less than or equal to 0.3 mm thickness is placed on the said substrate and ~~the said~~ layers are cured together in the said mold at a temperature of 150 to 225 C to form an intermediate article, and
- (c) ~~finally the article is removed removing said intermediate article from the said mold and cured curing it~~ in an oven at a temperature of 100 to 150 C such that the cross linking of the layers forms a permanent bond between them[,] and thereby forming said

S/N 10/711.607 (AMA No. 2004-309-SSI)

multi-layer article ~~wherein the fluoroelastomer comprises a monomer segment derived from an olefinic hydrocarbon.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 12, wherein the said fluoroelastomer film is a copolymer derived from a monomer selected from ~~the~~ a group consisting of tetrafluoroethylene, vinylidene fluoride, hexafluoropropylene and an olefinic hydrocarbon.

14. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 13, wherein the said olefinic hydrocarbon is selected from ~~the~~ a group consisting of ethylene and propylene.

15. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 12, wherein the said substrate is selected from ~~the~~ a group consisting of a non-fluorinated polymer or a metal.

16. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 15, wherein the said non-fluorinated polymer is selected from ~~the~~ a group consisting of nitrite rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene monomer rubbers, epichlorohydrin rubbers, ethylene-acrylate copolymer rubbers, polyamides, polyurethanes, polyolefins, and combinations thereof.

17. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the article is a fine bubble diffuser membrane as used in the waste water treatment industry.

18. (Original) The multi-layer article of claim 1, wherein the article is a coarse bubble diffuser membrane as used in the waste water treatment industry.

19. (New) The process of Claim 12, wherein said polymer layer comprises a fluoropolymer.

20. (New) The process of Claim 12, wherein said fluoroelastomer film comprises a monomer segment derived from an olefinic hydrocarbon.

S/N 10/711,607 (AMA No. 2004-309-SSI)

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RESPONSE TO A RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT

The Examiner in his Official Action dated January 30, 2007, has required restriction under 35 U.S.C. §121, stating that claims belonging to,

Group I, namely, Claims 1-11, 17 and 18, are "drawn to an article, classified in class 428, subclass 421", and

Group II, namely, Claims 12-16, are "drawn to a process", which is classified in Class 264, subclass 421, and that these groupings of claims are distinct from each other.

According to the Examiner, the "inventions are distinct, each from the other because" the inventions of Group I relates to the "process of making" and Group II relates to the "product made", and that in "the instant case the product as claimed can be made by a materially different process such as a three stage molding technique wherein the first stage involves cure at 126-150 °C, and/or the second stage involve cure at 226-250 °C, and/or the third stage involves cure at 151-180 °C."

The Applicants respectfully disagree with the restriction requirement that the subject Patent Application comprises of two separate and distinct inventions, and respectfully traverses said restriction requirement, as at present the most desirable process of making the article of Group I, is by using the process of Group II. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that the inventions expressed in both groupings of claims are directed to a single inventive concept and, therefore, request that the Examiner withdraws his restriction requirement and allow the prosecution of all the claims to remain in the subject application.

If the Examiner still persists in his restriction requirement under 35 U.S.C. §121, and does not withdraw his restriction requirement, then in that event the Applicants

S/N 10/711,607 (AMA No. 2004-309-SSI)

hereby elect to prosecute the invention of Group II, namely, Claims 12-16, which are directed to a process, classified in Class 264, subclass 241.

In that event, the Applicants, also withdraw from further prosecution the invention of Group I, namely, Claims 1-11, 17 and 18, classified in Class 428, subclass 421, as being drawn to a non-elected invention, without prejudice to Applicants' right to file a Divisional or Continuation or Continuation-in-Part Patent Application for said withdrawn claims. Therefore, the invention of Group I, namely, Claims 1-11, 17 and 18, can be withdrawn from further consideration by the Examiner, 37 CFR §1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

S/N 10/711,607 (AMA No. 2004-309-SSI)